

VZCZCXRO0906  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHBP #0786 2551545  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 111545Z SEP 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BAMAKO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9628  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0172  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0246

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAMAKO 000786

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2018  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [ML](#)  
SUBJECT: MALI ON UNGA THIRD COMMITTEE ISSUES

REF: STATE 93981

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Mary Beth Leonard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Charge discussed issues in reftel with Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary General Ambassador Keita on September 5. The Ambassador had in previous meetings looked forward to active consultation with the U.S. on UNGA positions, and so welcomed in particular the consultative nature of several of the points in the demarche.

¶2. (C) Keita acknowledged U.S. discomfort with the concept of no action motions blocking a full and open debate on problematic human rights situations without particular comment. He agreed that the human rights situations in Iran, the DPRK, and Burma had not changed over the course of the last year, but made no commitment to Mali altering its voting pattern from last year. (Mali voted for the no action motion on Iran, and abstained on the other two.) He agreed that the situation in Belarus appeared promising, and shared the hope that a resolution would not become necessary. Regarding African states, he noted that the African Unions' Peace and Security Committee, of which Mali is a member, will meet in New York on the 22nd and 23rd. Malian Foreign Minister Ouane will attend. He expected that Somalia, Darfur, and Zimbabwe would figure prominently in those discussions, and that the AU position, which Mali almost invariably supports, would be readapted with reference to developments in the next weeks.

¶3. (C) Keita observed the defamation of religions and freedom of expression issues were closely related, and noted that some European countries also appeared sympathetic to proposals on defamation of religion. He took Charge's point that any accommodation of such concerns should not be allowed to prejudice freedom of expression more generally. He appeared open to suggestions of alternatives such as resolutions negating infringements or amendments to strengthen these rights.

¶4. (C) Comment: Prior to consulting with his Minister, it was unlikely that Keita would commit to specific proposals, but his reactions provided a reasonably promising basis for further discussion as the UNGA season progresses. That said, in addition to Mali's careful attention to the African Union position to guide its votes in other international fora, it is also worth noting Mali's sensitivity to sustaining a wide variety of bilateral ties. Iran has an Embassy in Bamako that oversees an apparently close relationship; a toughening of Mali's Iran vote may still prove to be a hard sell. End Comment.  
LEONARD